

SPECIAL COTTON EDITION.

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## THE PRESENT COTTON SITUATION.

A Notable Article by President Harvie Jordan, of the Southern Cotton Growers' Protective Association.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

I have noticed with much pleasure the strong advocacy of the best interest of Southern agriculture through your widely-circulating paper. The press is the most powerful educator of modern times, and when rightly directed can accomplish great good for the masses. Your special "Cotton Edition," issued at this particular season of the year, I feel assured will be highly appreciated by the many readers into whose hands it will go. The present consumption of American cotton by the spinners of the world having exceeded the supplies, prices for the staple have advanced more than one hundred per cent since last October. Naturally, the present price of cotton, higher than it has been before in twenty years, has fired the hearts of Southern cotton producers with feverish impatience to become the possessors of as many bales of this valuable staple as possible in the year 1904. Those who had the good judgment to market their crop slowly through the present season enjoyed a part of the recent high prices, but a vast majority of the producers pursued the old method of rushing their staple on the market as fast as ginned, and the speculators reaped the profits.

Present indications point not only to an increased cotton acreage throughout the belt this year, but it is apparent that producers are also preparing to largely increase the use of commercial fertilizers. The general disposition of many planters at this time is to make the effort not only to increase their cotton acreage per plow, but to increase the yield per acre. Last year, we were forced to abandon five per cent of the acreage planted on account of the scarcity of labor, and we are now confronted with labor conditions not so flattering as they were in January, 1903. The increase of our cotton acreage can only be made at the expense of our supply crops. This would be a suicidal policy even if we felt assured that the prices of cotton for next season could be maintained at 10 and 12 cents per pound from the opening to the close of the selling season.

### PRICE OF PROVISIONS HIGH.

The present prices for Western wheat have advanced to more than \$1 per bushel and flour will soon be selling at from \$8 to \$9 per barrel. Mules are already selling at 25 per cent higher figures than they commanded one year ago. Commercial fertilizers have advanced fully 25 per cent. Clothing and all the necessities of life have recently been marked up in the same proportion.

Farmers who purchase their supplies with which to make the cotton crop under existing conditions cannot do so at less than 10 cents per pound for their staple. Great nations are now at war, and the price of provisions will necessarily be much higher than at present before the end of the year. The question of provisions for the vast armies is of more importance than that of clothing. The greatest mistake ever made by Southern cotton

producers will be to reduce their usual acreage in wheat, corn, oats, pease, sorghum and other similar crops in order to create an abnormal acreage in cotton which cannot be profitably cultivated or sold. We want to make enough cotton to meet the world's requirement for our staple next fall, but we will need the supply crops just as much, if not more, than the cotton.

### A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

Southern cotton producers now face the greatest opportunity they have had since 1865 to control the cotton situation next season and force the buyers of their staple to pay them its true and legitimate value. The first thing most needful is to make the smoke-house and corn crib the bulwark of safety between the growers and the commercial world. This can only be done by steadfastly clinging to the usual acreage devoted to supply crops and appreciating the high importance of a correct system of diversified agriculture.

We have already learned that a short crop of cotton sells for more money in the aggregate than an abnormally large crop. The second important lesson to learn is to market the crop slowly. No farmer should sell more than one-tenth of his crop each month, thereby extending the marketing season through ten instead of four months as at present.

### GRADUAL MARKETING.

We break the market every fall by the excessive weight of the staple and dump a twelve months supply on a ninety days market. It will be utterly impossible to maintain prices under that plan, and it must be, and I am glad to say, is gradually being abandoned. It is bad policy to make all of the year's obligations due in October. Farmers accounts should be lengthened out through January and April of the next year. Any credit system is bad enough, but our system places every debtor absolutely in the hands of the merchants during October and November. Through the Agricultural and Census Bureau Departments at Washington, D. C., we are now assured of correct statistics regarding the yield of the crop each season in advance of sales, and I am much gratified to know that such men as Neil, Buston and others of like calibre, have been thereby put out of business. Farmers can no longer be handicapped and hood-winked by the false reports of commercial concerns issued for private and selfish purposes. The work of years in bringing about these safeguards for cotton producers has at last been accomplished, and now the producers must put forward some individual thought and action in order to fully protect their interests from the avaricious hands of the commercial world. It cannot be done by increasing the present acreage in cotton and decreasing the acreage in supply crops. It cannot be done by rushing the staple on a glutted market and selling it at whatever price the buyers may offer. It can only be done by planting a reasonable acreage of each farm in cotton and by making a proper effort to increase the yield per acre; by raising all the supplies needed on the farm with which to make the crop, and the immediate adoption of a system which

will provide for a slow movement of the crop from the farms each season.

We must learn to be business men as well as the mere producers of the most valuable agricultural product in the world. We must learn how to sell as well as produce, and when we have made a crop sell it for a profit, else the year's labor has been in vain. I think great good would result from large meetings held in the States this summer by cotton producers and the question of marketing their cotton and cotton seed fully discussed from the business standpoint of the situation. I am satisfied that the more these questions are agitated among the producers the better the results. The time has come, when the producers have a bright prospect ahead of them if the situation is handled properly. Co-operation throughout the belt is essential to success. Let us not make the vital mistake at the very threshold of so bright a future by trying to raise a surplus which can be used to blight the present hopes which animates the heart of every grower. Let every farmer who reads these lines pause and consider before he plants his cotton acreage for the year 1904.

Very respectfully,

HARVIE JORDAN,

President Southern Cotton Growers' Protective Association.  
Monticello, Ga.

### Henry Grady on Cotton.

"What a royal plant it is! The world waits in attendance on its growth; the shower that falls whispering on its leaves is heard around the earth; the sun that shines on it is tempered by the prayers of all the people; the frost that chills it and the dew that descends from the stars are noted and the trespass of a little worm on its green leaf is more to England than the advance of the Russian army on her Asian outposts. It is gold from the instant it put forth its tiny shoot. Its fibre is current in every bank, and when, loosing its fleeces to the sun, it floats a sunny banner that glorifies the fields of the humble farmer, that man is marshaled under a flag that will compel the allegiance of the world and wring a subsidy from every nation on earth. It is the heritage that God gave to this people forever as their own when He arched our skies, established our mountains, girt us about with the ocean, loosed the breezes, tempered the sunshine and measured the rain—ours and our children's forever; as princely a talent as ever came from His hand to mortal stewardship."

Why, gentlemen, the other day the Congress of the United States appropriated \$200,000,000 to build the Panama Canal. Is there a man in this audience that will not say that \$200,000,000 expended in the betterment of our roads will do more good than if spent on the Panama Canal? I think it is going to make our Gulf of Mexico the great Mediterranean of the Western World; I think it is going to extend our trade with the Orient more than anything else; I am for the Panama Canal, but above all things I am for good roads.—Col. J. B. Killebrew.